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PRIZE ESSAY

ON THE

Improvement of Common Schools

IN

CONNECTICUT.

April 1846

Prize Essay.

THE
NECESSITY AND MEANS
OF
IMPROVING THE COMMON SCHOOLS
OF
CONNECTICUT.

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BY REV. NOAH PORTER, JR.

HARTFORD:
PRESS OF CASE, TIFFANY AND BURNHAM.
Pearl street, corner of Trumbull.
1846.

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A premium of *One Hundred Dollars*, which the undersigned have been authorized to offer, will be paid for the best Practical Essay, adapted to general circulation, presenting the most simple and efficient plan for improving the Public Schools in Connecticut, and for adding to the Public Schools in *Cities* a department for instruction in the higher branches of education.

Competent judges will be selected to decide on the merits of the Essays, which shall be transmitted to the undersigned on or before the 20th of April next.

The names of the authors to be sent in sealed envelopes, of which that one only will be opened which accompanies the Prize Essay.

THOMAS DAY,
THOMAS H. GAULLADET.
WILLIAM D. ELY.

Hartford, March 2, 1846.

In consequence of the above notice, twenty-seven Essays were received, and submitted to the Rev. George Burgess, Rector of Christ's Church, and Mr. N. L. Gallup, Principal of the Center District School, in this city, who awarded the premium to the Essay written by the Rev. Noah Porter, Jr.

THOMAS DAY,
THOMAS H. GALLAUDET,
WILLIAM D. ELY.

Hartford, May 21, 1846.

PRIZE ESSAY

ON THE NECESSITY AND MEANS OF IMPROVING THE COMMON SCHOOLS OF CONNECTICUT.

THERE was a time when the Common Schools of Connecticut were esteemed the best in the world, and when Connecticut, on account of her system of public education, was the brightest spot in all Christendom. Connecticut gave to the world the first example of a government providing a munificent fund for the education of every child within its limits, and of securing the benefits of this provision equally and forever to the humblest as well as to the highest, to the poorest as well as to the richest. She connected with this fund a system of general and minute supervision, good for its time, to preserve the fund from abuse and misapplication, and to give thoroughness and efficiency to its actual workings. It was a system suited to the state of society then existing—to the staid and sober habits of the people. It answered in a good measure, its design. It made teachers and parents both feel their responsibility.

The results of this school system, were great and good. Every hamlet in Connecticut of no more than twenty houses, whether spread out upon the plain, or crowded into the valley, whether sprinkled along the sloping hill-side, or wedged in among the brown rocks of some wild ravine, could show its district school-house, which was regularly opened for many months in the year. There was hardly to be known the son or daughter of Connecticut, who could not read and write. It was the rarest of all things to see one who had not received a good elementary education.

This was reported to the honor of Connecticut throughout the Christian world. The lover of his race, who had been rewarded for his zeal for the elevation of his countrymen, by a life-lease in a Prussian or Austrian dungeon, saw his prison wall all light about him when he thought of the one government in the world that had provided efficiently for the education of the humblest child, and gathered hope for the time, when his government and all governments should do the same. The surly and prejudiced Englishman, when he had said all the hard things that he could think of about America and the Yankees, could always be floored by one argument, and that was the Connecticut School Fund contrasted with the national debt of Great Britain. In our own Union, the other states were reproved

for their negligence, and spurred on to their duty by the example of what Connecticut had been the first to perform. The emigrant mother in Vermont or Western New York, as she looked around upon her untaught boys and girls, sighed for the schools of Connecticut and was ready to exchange the rich fields that were beginning to look so luxuriant about her, for the most rocky farm within the limits of a Connecticut school district.

But within the last twenty years a change in all these respects has taken place. Connecticut no longer holds the same high position which she once did. Austria and Prussia have provided their subjects with an efficient and successful Common School system. Other governments in Europe are slowly awaking to their duty and interest in respect to the same high matter. Despotism even is striving to make peace with its wronged and outraged subjects, by giving, in return for the civil rights which it withholds, the substantial blessings of universal education. Many of the states of our own Union are giving themselves to this cause with a zeal and energy which show them determined to make amends for past neglect and torpor. In Massachusetts, Ohio, New York, Georgia, Rhode Island, and many other states, vigorous and successful efforts are made. School funds are accumulated; taxes are readily imposed and cheerfully paid; Boards of Education are instituted; periodicals are circulated; public lectures are given; Normal Schools for the instruction of teachers are provided; teachers' conventions and Institutes are attended with zeal and profit. These, and other signs, show beyond question, that there is a strong movement in the public mind; that the people are being aroused. In some states and parts of states this interest is well-nigh enthusiastic.

But Connecticut! where is Connecticut the mean while? Where is she, who was once the star of hope and guidance to the world? She was the first to enter the lists, and was the foremost in the race. Is she foremost now? Whatever may be the truth of the case, it is certain, that she is not thought to be in the other states. It is the general opinion, *out of Connecticut*, that she is doing little or nothing; and, whereas, a few years since, her name was mentioned in connection with Common Schools, with honor, only; it is now, in this connection, coupled with expressions of doubt and regret, and that by wise and sober men. Her large State endowment is described as having put her effectually asleep, as having sent her to "Sleepy Hollow," from the influence of which, when she is aroused for a moment, it is to talk of her noble School Fund and James Hillhouse, just as Rip Van Winkle did of his neighbors who had been dead forty years. The School Fund is quoted every where *out of Connecticut*,—we venture to say it is quoted in every other state in the Union, as a warning and example to deter them from giving the proceeds of their own funds, except only on the condition, that those who receive shall themselves, raise as much as they take, and report annually as to the results. Those who go from other states into Connecticut, can hardly credit the testimony of their own senses when they are forced

to believe the apathy that prevails. Every newspaper and lecturer *out of Connecticut*, high and low, ignorant and knowing, sneers at the Connecticut School Fund, and the present condition of the Connecticut schools.

Are the people of Connecticut aware that this is the case? Do they know what the people of other states think and say of them? Do they believe that what is thought and said is true and deserved? We can hardly believe that they are generally aware of the bad repute into which their schools have fallen. Or if they are informed in respect to it, they do not believe that they merit so bad a name. The majority are too well contented to leave their schools as they are. They persuade themselves that their school system works as well as any public school system can be expected to work; that notwithstanding all that may be said out of the state against the schools of Connecticut, these schools are better than those of any state in the Union. They are opposed to any agitation of the subject. They will give their hearts to no strong and united effort to improve their schools. On the other hand, those who know that our schools are inferior to those of some of the other states, and who see clearly, in the prevailing apathy, the certain signs of a still greater degeneracy, are almost discouraged to hope for any great and permanent improvement. Neither of these classes are wholly in the wrong, nor wholly in the right. It is not true, that the schools of Connecticut are as good as those of certain other states. It is not true, that our public school system is as good, or is managed as efficiently as the systems of many other states. There is not only danger, but a certain prospect, that if things remain as they are, the schools of Connecticut will degenerate still more, and Connecticut will be dishonored more and more, in the comparison with her sister republics. It is not true, indeed, that all the hard and contemptuous things that have been said about our schools and our school fund are just and deserved, but the facts can be brought to prove that there is too much ground for them, and that the public apathy on this subject is inexcusable and fraught with evil.

But we would not despair. Connecticut though slow to move, moves sure and strong when she is aroused. She is cautious and prudent, but when she sees the reasons for a change she will change in earnest. We have too much love for our native state to be willing to despair. We believe that she is still the soundest at heart of any state in the Union, and that on this subject, she will show herself worthy of her ancient reputation. In the hope of contributing to this end, the following remarks are offered in respect to the present condition of the Public Schools of Connecticut, and the remedy which may be employed with the hope of success.

What then is the condition of the Common Schools of Connecticut? Facts are stubborn things. We present the following, in which the contrast is strikingly exhibited:

First, as to appropriations for school purposes. Money is the sinews of education as of war. The willingness to appropriate money shows zeal for any cause. Connecticut, in 1795, set apart for school

purposes a large and increasing fund for the support of schools, which now amounts to \$2,070,000, and divides \$1.40 for every scholar between the age of 4 and 16. Besides this, there are the town deposit-fund and local funds. Instead of annexing to the reception of their annual dividend the condition of raising a specified sum, the annual taxation was gradually diminished, till in 1822 it ceased altogether. In 1845, it is not known that a single town or school society in the state, raised a tax for school purposes by voluntary taxation. In a few of the large city districts, a small property-tax is collected, and applied to the wages of teachers, but not amounting in the whole state to \$9,000, or 3 cents to each inhabitant, or 10 cents, to each child between the ages of 4 and 16.

Massachusetts and New York, as the capital and dividend of their school funds have increased, have, at the same time, increased the sums to be raised as a condition of receiving the dividend of their funds. From 1835 to 1845, the capital of the Massachusetts Fund was increased from \$500,000 to \$800,000. During the same period the amount annually raised in towns by tax, for the wages of teachers, has advanced from \$325,320 to near \$600,000. The statute of 1839 requires that \$1.25, for every child between the ages of 4 and 16, should be raised and actually expended for the purposes of instruction in each town, whereas, more than \$3.00 for every child of the above age was actually raised by tax in 1845 in 53 towns, more than \$2.00 in 190 towns, and \$2.99 is the average through the state. \$2.99 is the average in Massachusetts and 10 cts. in Connecticut. It is instructive to look over the list of towns as arranged in the school returns of Massachusetts for 1846. The town standing first is a new town just out of Boston, which raises \$7.64. The town numbered 8 is an unpretending agricultural town in Worcester county, which raises \$4.82. The town numbered 30, a small town, raises \$3.77. The town numbered 280 raises by tax \$1.43 per scholar, which is 3 cts. more than every scholar in Connecticut receives from the School Fund.

In New York, when the legislature in 1838, virtually increased the capital of the School Fund from \$2,000,000 to near \$6,000,000, the obligation on the part of the towns, to raise an amount equal to that distributed was not removed. Thus, while the appropriation by the state was increased from \$100,000 in 1835, to \$275,000 in 1845, the amount required to be raised by tax in the towns increased in the same proportion, viz., from \$100,000 to \$275,000, and the amount voluntarily raised by the towns and districts in 1845, more than quadrupled the amount raised in the same way in 1835.

In Rhode Island, the state appropriation has increased from \$10,000 in 1829 to \$25,000 in 1845, while the towns in 1829 received the state appropriation unconditionally, but are now required to raise a third as much as they receive.

In Maine, 40 cts. must be raised for every inhabitant, which is perhaps more than is required in any other of the New England states.

Second, as to the supervision of schools. The first effort, to set apart a class of officers for the special duty of visiting schools and ex-

examining teachers, was made by Connecticut in the school law of 1798, and there Connecticut has left the matter, except that the towns may now make returns to the commissioner of the School Fund, who is also superintendent of the schools. In the mean time other states have taken the suggestion from Connecticut and improved upon it. Massachusetts has a state Board of Education, with one individual devoting his whole time to collecting facts and diffusing information for the improvement of schools. New York has not only a state superintendent, but a school officer for each county, and a superintendent for each town. \$28,000 was paid in 1844 as salaries to the county superintendents. Vermont and Rhode Island have recently adopted the system of state, county, and town superintendents.

Third, as to the education and improvement of teachers. The first elaborate effort to call public attention in this country to the importance of Normal schools or teachers' seminaries, was made by Rev. T. H. Gallaudet, in a series of essays published in Hartford, in 1825. Massachusetts put this idea into actual being. By the offer of \$10,000 from Hon. Edmund Dwight, of Boston, the legislature unanimously appropriated an equal amount for the annual expense of three Normal schools for three years, and at the close of the third year, provision was made for the erection of buildings and the permanent support of these schools. In New York, a State Normal School has been established in Albany, and \$10,000 annually appropriated for this object.

The first assembly of teachers, like those now known as Teachers' Institutes, ever held in this country, was held at Hartford in 1839, and it is believed to have been the last but one held in Connecticut. This important agency has since been introduced into New York, Ohio, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Vermont. In New York more than 6,000 teachers assembled in the different counties in the autumn of 1845. In Massachusetts, \$2,500 have been appropriated by the legislature for their encouragement during the current year.

Fourth, School-houses. The first essay which is known to have been prepared to expose the evils of school-houses badly constructed, warmed, lighted, and ventilated, was read at a state Convention of the friends of education in Hartford, in 1830; and for nearly 9 years after, five school-houses only in the state are known to have been repaired and built in accordance with its suggestions. The same essay was read and published in Boston in 1831, and was followed by immediate attention to the subject in different parts of the state. In 1838, a new impulse was given to this kind of improvement by Mr. Mann's Report on the subject, and from that time till 1844, the amount of \$634,326 was expended for the construction and permanent repairs of school-houses. Within the past two years, one-third of the school districts of Rhode Island have repaired old school-houses or constructed new ones after improved plans. Since 1838, more than \$200,000 has been expended in this way.

Fifth, School-libraries. The first *juvenile library* perhaps in the world was established in Salisbury, Conn., more than half a century

since, and the originator of the school district library enterprise was a native of this state. This is about all that Connecticut is known to have done in this department. In 1838 New York appropriated a sum equal to about \$5 for every school district, or \$53,000 for the whole state, on condition that a like amount should be raised by the several towns, both sums to be spent in the purchase of books for school district libraries. Six years after this law passed there were more than one million and a half of volumes scattered through every neighbourhood of that great state. Massachusetts, for one year, appropriated the income of its school fund for this object on certain conditions, and at this time every school district is supplied with a library open to all the children and adults of the community.

We adduce these statistics as testimony concerning the degree of interest which is felt in Connecticut on this subject, compared, with the zeal that prevails in the above named states. We discuss not here, the importance or the wisdom of these measures. We have other testimony still more direct. It comes from the people themselves. Let any man study the returns of the school visitors as reported to the legislature in 1845, let any man study the reports now on file in the Commissioner's office for the year just closing, and he will receive one uniform and desponding confession in respect to the apathy that prevails—like an atmosphere of death. Particular defects are named and remedies are suggested, but the want of public interest is uniformly named as the worst and most disheartening evil. Then let him contrast these returns with those of many other states, and what a change will he notice. On the one hand is heard the voice of declension and despondency, on the other, the language of progress and hope.

But this does not exhaust the evidence. Those who go from Connecticut into other states, and from them into Connecticut, feel a shock in the transition. It is like going from a cellar into the sunshine, or from the sunshine into a cellar. We know an intelligent gentleman who has seen his scores of years, who has recently removed from Rhode Island into the "land of steady habits," and can hardly understand or believe that the apathy which he finds, can be a reality. The writer has within a few years made the change the other way, from Connecticut to the Bay State. He too has been forcibly impressed with the contrast. In one particular, this contrast is very striking. In Connecticut, the people have been persuaded, that to be taxed for the support of Common Schools, is a levy upon the poor, for the schools of the rich. In Massachusetts, the people *know* that all such taxes are a lawful tribute from the rich, for the benefit of the poor. We have seen in the latter state, in a crowded town meeting, a thousand hands raised as by magic, to vote the largest of two sums named by the school committee, a sum which was nearly a dollar for every individual of the entire population, men, women and children. The motion was made by one of the wealthiest men in the town, whose own children were too old to attend the public school. It was supported by others wealthier than he, and having no interest

of their own in the schools. A proposition to set apart five hundred dollars as a fund to be distributed to the feeble districts, at the discretion of the town committee, was moved in the same way, and carried without the show of opposition. In the same town, the year following, the school tax was increased by two thousand dollars, though the most important district had ten days before taxed itself nearly nine thousand dollars for land and a building for a high school. This occurred in a town by no means the foremost to engage in school improvements, and not even now the most conspicuous for its zeal or its expenditures. In Lowell, Salem, Worcester, Springfield, Roxbury, and in towns of less importance, the public school-houses are the best buildings in the town, inviting without for their aspect of beauty and solidity, and within for their convenient apartments and their abundant apparatus. We have seen something of the working of this school system for years. We have observed the conscientious and honorable pride felt in the public schools, by those influential for wealth and talent, who give to these schools their influence, and send to them their sons and daughters. What is of far more consequence and interest, we have freely mingled in the families of those in humbler life, and learned from the lips of parents their high sense of the value of these schools which cost them little or nothing, and which promised to give their children all the education which they desired. We have heard from the mother of a large family of boys, hearty regrets, that her sons must be removed from the school by the departure of the family from town. Seeing these things, we could not but conclude that public schools may attain high perfection, and that such schools are the choicest of earth's blessings.

But this introduces the second and the most important of our inquiries—"What can be done to improve the public schools of Connecticut?" It is of little use to conclude that these schools sadly need such improvement, if no remedy can be devised. To summon a counsel of ill-natured and desponding physicians, rather hurts than helps the patient, if all that they can do is to find fault by his bedside. It is with diffidence, yet with strong conviction that we make the following suggestions:

The friends of Common Schools should not place their main reliance on legislative enactments and influence. Not that legislative action if united and hearty, is not most desirable; not that a well digested reform of the school laws is not called for; nor again that if it could be secured and made permanent it would not be a most important step towards final success. But what if such action is not to be hoped for? What shall be done? Shall we say that nothing can be done? This has been said too long already. The common feeling has been that until the legislature should move, to an entire change in the school law, nothing is to be hoped for. The guilt of the public neglect and the excuse for the general apathy have been all carried to the doors of the government and left there, as if nothing could be done without its aid. This is a false view of the case. Important as legislative action may be, of itself it can accomplish lit-

tle. It must be carried home by the awakened zeal of the people. It is the sign and stimulant of the public mind aroused. To effect such action, if it shall ever be effected, the public feeling must call with a commanding voice. In the states in which so much has been done, in connection with a revisal of their school system, the interest has not so much been created by the new laws, as it has itself created them. The laws have been the product of the zeal of the public, which zeal has itself given life and efficiency to the laws. In Rhode Island, where, at this moment, there is going forward a most enthusiastic movement for Common Schools, it is carried forward by individual agency and expense, seconded by school laws indeed, but borne forward by the people, as one of the mighty swells of their own ocean lifts the stranded vessel from the beach.

The main reliance in Connecticut, as in other states, must be placed on the waking of the public mind, by the ordinary means of moving this mind. The press must be enlisted; vigorous pens must be set in motion; all political parties must lend their aid; lecturers must be employed; conventions must be held; the pulpit must speak out, till a conscience shall be created and aroused in respect to the duties of Christians towards the neglected and half heathenized population in their midst. Facts—facts, on this subject can be made to speak, as they are uttered by zealous but fair minded men. The truth of the case can be demonstrated till no man shall dare to deny it, that Connecticut is far behind her sister states in this matter, and will soon be still farther in the rear. If this is evaded or denied, it can be proved. All this will involve expense and self-denial, and difficulties, and discouragements. But without this active agency no change is to be hoped for. The agency must be sustained; the expense must be incurred, and the agitation must be prosecuted.

But what specific plan shall be urged? What shall it be proposed to effect? What principles shall be aimed at, asserted and raised upon our banner? In answer, we say,—Popular education is no longer a theory;—it has been tested and determined by experiment. The principles which a public school system must involve, have been settled by trial. These must enter into every plan that will work with success. They may be reached in different methods; but they must be reached in some way or the plan will fail. What are these principles? We answer:—

First. A thorough examination and supervision of the teachers and the schools by competent and faithful men. Teachers of common schools are the servants of the public. In Connecticut, they are mainly supported from the public funds. They receive from the State, year by year, more than one hundred and fifteen thousand dollars. Let them be held to a real and rigid responsibility for their qualifications for their place, and for the fulfillment of its duties.—There is not a turnpike company in Connecticut which yields a revenue of a hundred dollars the year, for whose control and supervision a commissioner is not appointed—whose services the company are required to pay. Not a Bank is left unvisited by a commissioner

to inspect its books and supervise its proceedings. Nay, not an individual is allowed to practice the simple business of a measurer of land, before he has been examined by the County Surveyor, and received a license from him, for which license he must pay the fees. Not a physician, nor clergyman, nor lawyer, is allowed the privileges or emoluments of his profession, till he has been examined and licensed by some individual, or body of men. Why are not the teachers of the public schools subjected to the same necessity?—to an examination which shall express the solemnity of the trust committed to their hands, and the importance of the profession to which they are admitted? Would the hardship be intolerable and excessive—would it be a hardship at all, if every man who proposes to teach, was first required to obtain a license from one or more commissioners in his county, or senatorial district, for which he himself should pay? The present system of examination does not answer the object which it was intended to accomplish. It is the testimony of by far the majority of the Boards of Examiners in the state, that it is little more than a form, and often no better than a farce. A young man wishes to obtain fifty or one hundred dollars by keeping a winter school. He goes boldly to the committee, for he knows they will find it hard to refuse him permission—for the committee consists of the clergyman to whose parish he belongs, and who will be slow to think him unqualified, as common schools go; of the physician, who will not like to offend the young man's parents; and of the lawyer, who is looking to political promotion. However conscientious or faithful this committee may desire to be, it is hard for them often to know what to decide. The examination of teachers is not their business, and they have framed no fixed standard by which to judge. Their duties are thankless duties—a favor done to the public, rather than a trust for which they are held responsible, and their field is so limited that they cannot give to it earnest and devoted energy.

Let the change proposed be introduced. Let the candidate be obliged to go out of his native town for his license. Let him know that he is to be examined in the presence of twenty or fifty other candidates, and by those who have no partiality for him, arising from personal acquaintance; and to be qualified to teach a winter school, would be thought a graver matter than it now is. The profession would be elevated at once. A higher grade of qualifications would be sought for and attained. There would be that dignity and pride attached to the calling of a teacher, which is secured by an honorable admission through a difficult entrance. And this need not cost the state a dollar.

If to the same commissioners should be intrusted the duty of visiting the schools within a given district, another advantage would be gained. In passing from one school to another, they would have room for comparison, and a field for suggestions. They could meet the teachers of each town in friendly and profitable interviews. They could confer with the town committees, and visit the schools with

them ; to receive and give light in respect to the wants of each town, and the remedies for these defects. The friends of education, the benevolent and the public-spirited, would look to them with hope and confidence, and would gather around them to aid and encourage them. The expense for this service need not be great. We take it for granted, that a school visitor has as good right to be paid for his time and labor, as a fence viewer, or pound keeper. If the school visitors should relinquish their duty to them in whole or in part, and with it the pay which they ought to receive, and in some cases do receive, the additional cost of this arrangement would not be great. But what if, perchance, it should cost something ? It is worth something. It would be a reproach to the memory of his fathers, for a Connecticut man to think otherwise. It would be a slander on the founders of the School Fund, who thought two millions not too great a sum to set apart for common education, to say that it was not worth the while to pay something to make its blessings more valuable and certain.

We make this suggestion with more confidence, when we remember, that it was the opinion of one of the most sagacious men that Connecticut ever boasted, that the appointment of County Commissioners to perform the services specified, would be the crowning feature to perfect the Connecticut School System.

Second. Teachers' Institutes may be held throughout the State and that also, without delay. These are conventions for mutual improvement and excitement. They may be also called travelling Teachers' seminaries.—These have been held in other states with the most striking results. The idea was indeed conceived in Connecticut, years ago, and was tried on a small scale for two years in succession. At a place and time previously agreed upon, the teachers within a given district are invited to be present, to spend a week or more in convention. The time is employed in discussing the best methods of teaching reading, writing, &c., and the various points connected with school discipline. What is more to the point, lessons are given in these various branches, and those whose business it is to teach, receive instruction from eminent and experienced instructors. We noticed in a recent account of one of these Institutes, that a distinguished elocutionist and teacher of reading was present, and gave a course of lessons. We doubt not that every teacher who read with him, or who heard others read, for several days, will read the better all his life, and that the reading in the scores of schools there represented, has received an impulse for the better for the few days spent at that Institute. The same benefit might be looked for from the presence of teachers in simple drawing, writing, and arithmetic. At these meetings, experienced teachers give the results of their various methods, of their many mistakes, and the ways in which they were corrected. Here raw and timid teachers are initiated into their new business ; older teachers receive valuable suggestions, which their experience and their sense of want, enable them at once to understand and to apply ; self-conceited teachers are forced to let go some of their old notions, and to grow wiser as they compare

themselves with those who know more than themselves. An enthusiasm in their business is excited. They are impressed with right views of the dignity and solemnity of their employment. They form new and strong attachments, and from these interesting and exciting scenes, they go fresh and cheerful to the labors of the season, furnished with valuable knowledge. These Institutes differ from ordinary conventions, in that they furnish definite business, and are spent in gaining real knowledge. They are not wasted in idle harangues and fine speeches. They continue long enough to lay out much real work, and to accomplish it. They furnish a model for Town Associations, and the teachers who have felt the advantages of these larger meetings, continue their influence, by repeating the same thing on a smaller scale. So important have they been found to be by trial, that in the year 1845 a friend of education in Massachusetts gave one thousand dollars to defray the expenses of a series of these meetings, and the legislature of that state, during its session now just expiring, appropriated two thousand five hundred dollars for the current year, to enable the teachers of the state to avail themselves of these advantages.

Let these Institutes be held in Connecticut with no delay. Let them be carried into all parts of the state. Let them be made interesting by providing able assistants, and by the co-operation of the friends of education, each in their own district. Let some provision be made by the liberal, that the expense attending them shall not be too burdensome. This experiment can be made without any legislative countenance. It needs only a willing heart, and a ready hand. Let it be made thoroughly in all parts of the state, and let it be seconded, as it can be, and as it *must* be, in order to be successful, and it will do much to kindle zeal and to create hope for our common schools. It is simple, voluntary, practicable, and cheap. Let it be tried, and it will not be many years before the inquiry will be raised, whether an education for their business is not required for common school teachers, and whether schools for this specific purpose are not demanded. This suggests another proposition.

Third. In order to improve the schools of Connecticut, schools are needed for the education of teachers. Normal schools can be provided in Connecticut as easily as in other states. If it is not done by the state, it can be done by the benevolent. If the expense is not defrayed by the legislature, as in Massachusetts and New York, it can be defrayed by individuals, as in New Hampshire. In some way it will be done, when the public mind is aroused as it must be. Teachers themselves desire the advantages furnished by such seminaries. In addition to Normal schools, there is greatly needed an educational establishment in some central situation, well furnished with buildings and apparatus, and well enough endowed to furnish the best tuition at a low rate; an institution where the sons of the Connecticut farmers can receive a good education in all the higher branches, as well as in the elements of the classics, and in which the sciences which pertain to agriculture, should be thoroughly mastered. Such an in-

stitution would be a central light. It would furnish a noble basis for accomplished common school teachers. Let us hope that the time may not be far distant when we shall be able to speak of our Williston and of our seminary, like the one which is honored by his name.

Fourth. The teachers of our schools, to teach better must be paid better. Their business must be made more lucrative and permanent. It must be made an object for them to qualify themselves amply for their vocation, and to continue in it longer. This can be done only as teaching yields a respectable living. There are not more than ten teachers in the state who have a living now, while there are more than a hundred school districts, that with a judicious arrangement, and their present income, might sustain the same teacher from year to year. But the means of payment can be greatly increased. There is not a state in the Union in which teachers can be paid so well as in Connecticut, and in which the burden shall be so little felt. No state has so magnificent a school fund. Let there be raised in addition, less per scholar, than is cheerfully raised in the majority of agricultural towns in Massachusetts, and the best teachers in the country would flock into Connecticut, as many now rush from it. The people of these towns were not impoverished by raising this sum.—Nor would it impoverish the people of Connecticut. On the contrary, it would enrich them; for it can be proved that a liberal sum cheerfully raised for a course of years by any community for common education, will return to that community in money, with more than compound interest.

Fifth. The cities and large villages should at once make use of their peculiar facilities for elevating their public schools. Thus will they show, in actual results, what can be accomplished, and excite other towns with zeal not to be behind them. The plan which we propose is extremely simple, and has been tested so often and so long as to have passed the best of all tests—that of actual experiment.—The central and more compact portions of the city or village, should first be constituted a single school district. Let the younger scholars—those younger than from eight to ten—be distributed in primary school-houses, which should be located at convenient points in the district, so that the walk should in no case be fatiguing. They should be instructed in all cases by female teachers, in summer and winter, and from year to year. Female teachers are cheaper; female teachers are better for this immature age. Their influence is more gentle; it forms the girls to mild dispositions and graceful manners; it infuses a portion of its own sweetness into the harsh and self-willed perverseness of early boyhood. Female teachers are more patient than those of the other sex. They can teach, with better effect, music, drawing, and writing. Last and not least—experience has shown that primary schools, such as we speak of, can in their hands, be conducted with the most entire success. We would that all the parents could be introduced to some of these delightful schools, taught by one or more females, “in whose own hearts, Love, Hope, and Patience, had

first kept school." We have seen the pupils gather around the teacher each morning with eagerness and new delight. We have heard from their own lips, breaking out in unconscious expressions of love, the strong affection which she had inspired. We have heard the clear and shrill piping of their cheerful songs. We have measured the quiet moral influences that have been thus infused, and have gathered strength from day to day.

From these primary schools, after having passed through a prescribed course of study, and in general, after having attained a fixed age, the pupils should go to the central school. If the district is small, one school will suffice to be taught by a master through summer and winter. If it is large, it may be subdivided into more or fewer gradations—the lower to be taught by females. In almost all cases, the assistants of the masters may be females, and by the aid of two experienced and competent females, and with the convenience of recitation rooms, one master can control from one hundred to one hundred and fifty pupils. Higher than this, if the population will allow it, there may be another school, the High School, or two High Schools—one for each of the sexes. To these no pupil should be admitted, except on passing a close examination, and this school should teach the highest branches that can be contemplated in a system of universal education—the Mathematics, the Natural Sciences, and perhaps the elements of the Languages. All these schools should be under one system, and be free to all. This is no theory. There are at this moment in villages of New England, of from one thousand five hundred to four thousand inhabitants, public school-houses, more tasteful and convenient than any college building in Connecticut. In these school-houses an education is given so superior that no select school can live by their side. To these schools scholars crowd from the neighboring towns, and will perform menial services in families, in order to gain a residence in the village and admission to its public school. This is as it should be. This is republicanism. But how is it in Connecticut? Some of the cities have made a beginning, it is true, and with good to themselves and a healthful influence upon the communities around. But there are hundreds of communities, in which this plan might be introduced, which are opposed to it altogether. There are some in which it has been tried, and abandoned through opposition. We know a village in which two thousand dollars were to be raised, all the preliminaries having been adjusted, and this money was in the main to be voted for by the people, and to be paid by a single man, who was himself anxious to pay it, and yet the enterprise failed by the cry of "*a school for the rich!*" What is the state of many of these villages, both manufacturing and agricultural? Is it not true that select schools are sustained by the rich and the reputable, both for older and even for very young children?—that in consequence, the common schools have been abandoned more or less, generally, to the poor and the neglected, and have degenerated because the rich do not care for them? Is it not true that the degeneracy of the common schools in the

best and largest towns of Connecticut may be traced to the time when select schools were introduced as its beginning, and that this degeneracy has been going forward ever since? Is it not true, to confirm this matter by argument that cannot be broken, that the best common schools now existing are to be found in those towns and districts in which select schools are impossible, and all classes of the community are interested to make the public school the best school.

Is it not true moreover, that by this separation of intercourse, of sympathy, and of acquaintance, begun in infancy, matured in childhood, and hardened in youth into contempt and scorn, on the one side, and into jealousy and malice on the other; there has been commenced in Connecticut a permanent and anti-republican division of society, on the one side of which, social oppression shall gather strength, and in the other shall lurk the incendiary and the murderer?

Sixth. The doctrine should be understood and proclaimed in Connecticut, that the property of the whole community may rightfully be taxed, for the support of public education. It should be proclaimed, because it is the true doctrine. The pecuniary interests of a community like our own, to say nothing of those interests that are higher, are deeply concerned in the question whether all shall be educated. They are as vitally concerned too, that all shall be *well* educated. The property of the rich, whether they have children or not, may and should be taxed, because the security of that property demands that this insurance should be effected upon it. The tax which they pay is only the premium on this insurance. Besides, it is cheaper as well as more grateful, to pay a tax for the support of schools, than it is to pay the same for jails and poor-houses.

In Connecticut this right is denied and disputed. A tax may be levied on a district for the construction and repair of school-houses, but when a sum is to be raised additional to that which is received from the public funds, it is left to those who have children to send to the school. The consequences of this system are most mischievous. The summer school becomes a select school, instead of being a public school. Or perhaps to make it open to all, for a month or two, the allowance from the public treasury is eked out by the greatest possible extenuation. The cheapest teacher is hired, and the winter school is robbed of the means of subsistence, in order to furnish the thinnest possible allowance for its starving sister in the summer. When this "short allowance" is consumed, the children of the laboring poor, at once the most numerous and the most needy, are retained at home, because the parents can or will not pay the *capitation* tax. The children of the rich are sent to the select school of a higher order, the one of their own providing; while the children of the middling classes occupy the district school-house, with the select school No. 2. Hence, in the summer, troops of children go no where to school, except to the school of nature, which to them is the school of ignorance and vice, and the schools which are kept up in multitudes of cases, are the merest skeletons of schools, both in numbers and in character. This bad and unequal system is sustained from two

causes—the opposition of so many tax-payers to a system of property taxation—and what is more unaccountable, the opposition of those who are *tax-voters* but not *tax-payers*, who are set against such a system, because it tends to build up schools for the rich! More than one instance can be named, in which this doctrine has been industriously circulated by some cunning miser among his poorer neighbors, and they have gone to the school meeting to vote against all expense, not dreaming that their advisers were trembling in their shoes, for fear of a petty rate bill. And so they have voted against any change, and saved their neighbor all expense, literally, and brought down the tax upon their own heads.

This is unequal, anti-republican, and wrong; and it ought to be made odious. It should be held up in all its unfairness. The right of the town or school society to tax its property should be embraced by all parties. The party calling itself conservative should proclaim it, because it tends so certainly to the security of society. The party calling itself popular should hold it, because it sends one of the best of blessings to the door of every man.

To this should be added, the condition attached to the distribution of the State fund, that no school society should receive its lawful portion, except on the condition, that it should raise by taxation, a specified sum for every scholar. This would be a hard doctrine in Connecticut, it is true, and that is the very reason why it should be insisted on. It is true and most important, and should be boldly uttered. The other States, without an exception, that distribute from school funds, do it on such a condition. The entire public sentiment of the Union, is fixed and unchangeable on this point, and we grieve to say that we fear the neglect of Connecticut has been a warning against following her example. Shall it be that this munificent bequest of our fathers, given to promote the cause of public education, shall fail of its design through the neglect or perversion of their sons? or shall it serve this cause, most effectually, as Connecticut shall stand forth as a perpetual monument to warn against the like use of such funds? Shall it be that the State which they designed should be the model State to the Union, shall serve only as an example to admonish its sister States, rather than as one to excite and inspire them? Are we not bound as trustees of this fund, to secure the most complete fulfillment of their designs, and, as experience and a change of circumstances call for new safeguards, to provide these safeguards? May not the people make the raising of a specified sum on the property of the State, a condition against the improvident waste of this bounty?

The argument on this subject is very simple, and as it would seem, very convincing. In order to improve our Common Schools, more money must be provided. If it is raised, as it now is by a tax upon those who use the schools, then the schools are no longer common schools, but for a part of the year, they must be select schools. The one must embarrass the other. Those who will have better schools will leave the public schools altogether. Those who depend on the

common schools, cannot or will not elevate them. But introduce a property tax, and you make the schools the property and the pride of the whole people. You make it for the interest of the rich to use the money which they now expend for the support of higher establishments to raise and improve the public schools. Thus the blessings of this expenditure will be diffused. Its light and warmth will not be like that of the fire which cheers one apartment only, but like the heat of the blessed sun, which gives no less to the rich, for what it gives to the poor. To connect the raising of a small sum per scholar, as a condition of receiving the bounty of the State, is the simplest and surest way of elevating the schools of the whole State, together and alike.

These are the principles which must be received in Connecticut, and believed by its citizens generally, in order to secure a thorough improvement in its common schools. It might be shown, that some of the most important of them, were suggested by citizens of Connecticut, long before the present movement for Common Schools commenced in the other States. They are of Connecticut origin. Let them be owned as her own and here put in practice, as they can be no where beside.

These principles may be propagated. Let the legislature be memorialized. But let not the legislature be relied upon as the only hope. It may not be expedient that the government should move at once. It may not be practicable, if it is expedient. Individuals can do much without the government. A State association can be formed. Measures can be taken to unite the friends of education throughout the State. Teachers' Institutes, and Normal Schools can be set on foot by individual and associated benevolence, as they have been in a portion of New Hampshire. Such a movement would not be very expensive. The agencies need not be costly, nor the expenditures great, but the work is precious, and worth much cost, if it were required.

Nor is the work discouraging. It is discouraging in its beginnings, but rapid in its advances. Every district animated with a right spirit, diffuses light and wakens interest in ten of its neighborhood. Every school-house, well constructed, with its convenient apartments, its successful teacher, and its happy scholars, gives an impulse which cannot be computed. Parents are animated with hope and desire. Children ask why their own school-house cannot be as good. Prejudice is softened. Scepticism is convinced, and public spirit is awakened.

The Connecticut people may be aroused. There are thousands and tens of thousands, who are ready to stand upon their feet and to put their shoulders to this work. They are not rash, nor headlong it is true—they are cautious and stable, but they are the more steadfast when thoroughly convinced. They are not profuse and extravagant in their expenditures—but they have money, and they are willing to give it for objects seen to be important. They are not carried away by vague declamation or transcendental moonshine—but they have

intellects to discern and hearts to feel, in respect to a concern so practical and good as that of public education. Let the work be commenced with vigor and with hope.

In carrying it forward, two classes of citizens can be especially useful. On them rests a great and peculiar responsibility. We name first, the acting politicians of all parties. They are now uncommitted as partisans for or against any system. They have an equal interest in the improvement of schools. It would be a slander which they would resent with indignation, to say that they do not feel an equal zeal for this most important interest, in which the prosperity and pride of the State are equally concerned. Eminent individuals of all political names are known to be zealous for common school reform. There are subjects enough beside this, out of which political capital can be made. Attempts to do this elsewhere, have been signally rebuked. Let parties divided by questions of national policy, vie with each other in their zeal and efficiency, in respect to this common interest, for which every man's hearth-stone cries out in his ears. Let it never be said that the citizens of Connecticut grind the bodies and souls of their children between the upper and nether millstone of political contests. Heathen barbarism, offered to "Moloch, horrid king," its children in sacrifice by sending them through devouring flames blazing fiercely on either side,

" Though for the noise of drums and timbrels loud
Their children's cries unheard, that pass'd through fire
To his grim idol."

Let not this be enacted on a more fearful scale, in civilized and Christian Connecticut.

On the clergy of Connecticut there rests also a great and solemn responsibility. It is a religious duty to care for the untaught, the neglected, and the ignorant. It is a duty to give to such, the best intellectual and moral culture which we can. It is a duty which we owe to our nearest neighbor, a duty which is simple, pressing, and most easily discharged. So do we best aid and prepare them for influences appropriately and directly religious. Let this duty be preached, on the Sabbath and from the pulpit. Let it be preached till it is believed, and the hearers show their faith by their works. We raise money to provide schools for the destitute in our own land. We raise it also, to send to Ceylon, and Burmah, and China, that schools may be established, which may prepare the youthful mind for the influences and the truths of our holy religion. And yet there are towns in Connecticut in which there are scores of children, which for want of that moral and intellectual culture, that the public schools might give, are, as really, though not in the same degree, hopeless subjects of religious truth, as many children of Ceylon and Burmah. We have seen children of this character. Besides these, there are thousands for whom, a teacher could do far more than a clergyman, and on whom the church can act most directly and efficiently through the teacher.

We are well aware that efforts have been made to excite distrust of any system of public education, on religious grounds, and to arouse against it sectarian prejudice and conscientious convictions. There may have been occasion for these feelings in some states of the Union. Injudicious management, false principles, efforts to propagate peculiar principles, insidious and open, may have been noticed. The school system has therefore been held up as anti-religious. The doctrine has been proclaimed that each church must have its separate schools, in order to secure an education thoroughly Christian.

In Connecticut there need be no fear of embarrassment of this kind. The people of Connecticut, with scarcely an exception, are of one mind in the belief of the following truths. They believe in the moral duties as enforced by the words and life of Jesus. They believe with Washington, that public morality is best secured by religious faith and religious feeling. None of them will object to the use of simple but fervent prayers and hymns, to the inculcation of the duty of imitating Christ, and of trusting in him. In these points they can all unite, and they can turn them to use in their public schools. What the children need to be taught beside, can be supplied in the family, the Sabbath school, the pulpit.

Such is the position of things in Connecticut. We have seen her ancient glory; the present depression with its causes; the need of effort; the points to which this effort should be directed, and the grounds of discouragement and hope. Shall this good work be undertaken? Shall this field be entered? No state in the Union has means so abundant. No state can, if it will, have schools so splendid and so good. Its population is homogeneous, frugal, intelligent, moral, and religious. It has been accustomed to common schools for generations. It has a school system already established in the hearts and habits of all, which needs improvement only, and not a new beginning. The memory of the past calls us to effort. The necessity of the present will not let us alone. The voices of the venerable dead, speak to us in solemn tones from that dim and distant world to which they have gone, and command us not to be untrue to the precious trust which they garnered for us. The cries of the living come up to us, and in tones piteous as an infant's wailing, beseech us to spare their childhood from neglect, and their future manhood from ignorance and crime. The honor of the State and of the fathers of the State calls on its citizens. The sons of Connecticut who have gone out from the paternal mansion, burn with eager desire to be able to put to silence the reproaches which they are forced to hear, and to know that the spirit which provided the School Fund, still lives to make effectual that important trust. Those who were personally active in devising and securing this fund, would tell us that no care of ours can surpass the thoughtfulness with which Treadwell studied its conception, and no labor of ours can compare with the daily and nightly toil with which Hillhouse and Beers secured its investments, and watched its securities. The question is, shall Connecticut then be true to herself? We have seen the trim and noble

ship, manned by a skillful crew, open the passage through an unknown and dangerous strait, and gallantly lead the way for a timid and creeping fleet, into a secure and long desired haven. We have seen her pass every shoal but the last, but just as she doubles its treacherous point, she grounds for an instant, and the cry is from the fleet, she will be stranded there ! They make all haste to rush past her. In their cry of exultation they forget all her guidance in the past. Shall *she* then be stranded, who has guided so many vessels to so noble a port ? Shall her last service be to lie on the quicksands, a decaying hulk, deserted and useless, except as a beacon to show the shoal on which she struck ? Shall she be stranded ? No, no ! A thousand times, No ! Let the cry then be, *Connecticut first to lead the way, and foremost forever !*

NOTE I.

PLAN AND MEASURES OF A VOLUNTARY ASSOCIATION FOR THE
IMPROVEMENT OF COMMON SCHOOLS.

The following suggestions indicate more in detail, the views of the author of the Essay as to the mode, at once simple and systematic; in which the friends of popular education can put forth their efforts for the improvement of common schools.

ARTICLES OF ASSOCIATION.

ARTICLE 1. This Association shall be styled the CONNECTICUT (*or the name of any Town or County can be inserted*) INSTITUTE OF INSTRUCTION, and shall have for its object the improvement of common schools, and other means of popular education in this State, (*or Town, or County.*)

ARTICLE 2. Any person residing in this State, (*or Town or County,*) may become a member of the Institute by subscribing this Constitution, and contributing any sum, annually, towards defraying its incidental expenses.

ARTICLE 3. The officers of the Institute shall be a President, two or more Vice Presidents, a Treasurer, a Recording Secretary, and a Corresponding Secretary for each county, (*or town in case of a county association,*) with such powers respectively, as their several designations imply; and who shall, together, constitute an Executive Committee.

ARTICLE 4. The Executive Committee shall carry into effect such measures as the Institute may direct; and perform such other acts not inconsistent with the objects of the association, as they may deem expedient, and make report of their doings, annually, and when called on, at any regular meeting of the Institute.

ARTICLE 5. A meeting of the Association for the choice of officers shall be held, annually, at such time and place as the Executive Committee may designate in a notice published in one or more newspapers; and meetings may be held at such other time and place, as the Executive Committee may appoint.

ARTICLE 6. This constitution may be altered at any annual meeting, by a majority of the members present, and regulations, not inconsistent with its provisions may be adopted at any meeting.

Measures which can be adopted by a voluntary Association to improve Common Schools.

1. Information can be collected and disseminated in every practicable way, in every district, town, and county in the State, as to the present condition of common schools, and other means of popular education, with plans and suggestions by which the excellencies of any one teacher, district, or town, can be improved and made general, and any defects be removed.

2. Meetings of the Association can be held in different towns for public addresses and discussions on topics connected with the condition and improvement of Common Schools.

3. A series of Tracts, each number devoted to some one important topic, relating to the organization and administration of a school system, or to the classification, instruction and discipline of schools, can be prepared and published for gratuitous distribution among teachers, school officers, parents, and every body who has a child to educate, a vote to give, or an influence to exert in relation to public instruction.

- 4. Editors and conductors of the periodical press can be enlisted to publish original, and selected articles relating to the subject.

5. Clergymen can be interested to present the subject in some of its bearings at appropriate times to their people.

6. Local associations of parents and the friends of education, and especially district and town associations of mothers and females, generally, for the purpose of visiting schools, and co-operating in various ways with teachers, can be formed and assisted.

7. Pecuniary aid and personal co-operation can be extended for the purpose of securing at different points, a school-house, with its appropriate in-door and out-door arrangements, a school library, a district school, and a village lyceum, which can be held up severally, as a *model of its kind*.

8. Good teachers can be assisted in finding districts where their services will be appreciated and rewarded, and district committees in search of good teachers, can be directed to such teachers as have proved on trial that they possess the requisite qualifications.

9. The necessary local arrangements can be made, and the services of experienced teachers secured for the purpose of facilitating the holding, in the spring and autumn, a teachers' class or Institute, where young and inexperienced teachers may spend one or two weeks in reviewing the studies which they are to teach, in the summer or winter schools; and witness, and to some extent, practice, the best methods of classifying, instructing, and governing a school.

10. The formation of town and county associations of teachers, for mutual improvement and the advancement of their profession, by weekly or monthly meetings, and by visiting each others' schools, and learning from each others' experience, can be encouraged.

11. Efforts can be put forth to collect a fund for the establishment, at the earliest moment, of a seminary where young men and young women, who have the desire and the natural tact and talent, can be thoroughly and practically trained for teachers of common schools.

12. A well qualified teacher, of the right tact and character can be employed to perform an itinerating Normal school agency through the schools of a particular town or county.

13. School celebrations or gatherings of all the children of a school society, or town, with their parents and teachers, for addresses and other appropriate exercises, can be held at the close of the winter and summer schools.

14. Village Lyceums can be established and assisted in getting up courses of popular lectures in the winter.

15. A central depository or office, supplied with plans of school-houses, apparatus, and furniture; a circulating library of books and pamphlets on education; specimens of school libraries, and the best text books in the various studies pursued in common schools, &c., can be established.

16. To give the highest efficiency to any or all of these means and agencies of school improvement, an individual should be employed to devote all, or a portion of his time, as agent under the direction of the Executive Committee of the Institute, and receive such compensation as can be raised by a special subscription for this purpose.

Every measure above enumerated has been tried and carried out in other states, successfully, by means of voluntary associations, similar to the one proposed.



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